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SUBJECT: COSTA RICAN FRUSTRATION WITH INABILITY TO IMPACT UNSC

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¶1. (U) Costa Rica finished its two-year stint on the United Nations Security Council on December 31 disappointed by its inability to have a significant impact on the way the body worked. Costa Rica began its turn on the Council with high hopes for improving the internal operations of the body. However, the GOCR left the Council with few tangible results to show from its labors.

¶2. (SBU) Foreign Minister Bruno Stagno has publicly lauded the GOCR's time on the Council as "very active" and having "developed a great effort to modify the work methods of the UNSC". However, he privately complained to us that holding a rotating seat on the Council was akin to being a "tourist", in that one could see what was going on but do little to affect it. MFA Political Director Alejandro Solano observed that rotating members were significantly disadvantaged by their lesser knowledge of the way the Council operated. For example, he noted that it took the Costa Rican diplomats time to discover that some procedures were simply customary rather than mandatory, as permanent members had led them to believe. MFA Chief of Staff Elaine White commented that Costa Rica now would have the challenge of trying to remain abreast of what was happening in the Council from the outside.

¶3. (SBU) One aim of the GOCR was to improve fairness and transparency in the UNSC, yet it had limited success even with very modest proposals. For example, it advocated for changing procedures to allow countries discussed at the UNSC to present first, before the UNSC members discussed the issue. (Solano likened the current procedure to allowing the judges to speak before the accused.) However, this initiative (and others like it) did not take hold-only Costa Rica made the change in practice-and Solano said they had left it in the hands of the Government of Austria, which is also interested in pushing similar reforms.

¶4. (SBU) White privately told us that the GOCR was a little unprepared for the assumption of their seat on the council in 2008 and faced a steep learning curve, in large part due to the lack of any meaningful records from their last turn on the council in the 1970s. To correct this for the future, she said they planned to publish a report sometime in April summarizing their experiences during their two years on the Council, which she promised to forward to the Embassy.

¶5. (SBU) Comment: As Minister of Foreign Affairs and UN veteran Bruno Stagno knows, reforming the UN is an uphill battle, especially for non-permanent members. While the GOCR might not have accomplished all it wished on this front, it did serve as a constructive voice on the Council, working especially well with the

USG on disarmament issues (Ref A). Costa Rica will now turn its sights to securing a seat on the UN Human Rights Council, which will allow it to continue to punch above its weight internationally.

BRENNAN